

# Multilingual

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**Pelindung:**

Kepala Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa

**Penanggung Jawab:**

Kepala Balai Bahasa Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah

**Pemimpin Redaksi:**

I Wayan Nitayadnya, S.S., M. Hum.

**Mitra Bestari :**

Prof. Dr. Hasan Basri, M.A., Ph.D. (Sosiolinguistik, Universitas Tadulako)  
Prof. Dr. Wedha Kusuma (Sastra Modern, Universitas Udayana)  
Prof. Dr. Lukman (Sosiolinguistik, Universitas Hasanuddin)  
Prof. Dr. Muhammad Rafi Tang (Sastra Modern, Universitas Negeri Makassar/  
Dr. Moh. Tahir, M.Hum. (Pengajaran Bahasa, Universitas Tadulako)

**Penyunting :**

Deni Karsana, M.A.  
Siti Fatinah, S.S., M.Pd.  
Nursyamsi, S.S., M.Pd.  
Dian Respati Pranawengtyas, S.S.

**Tata letak:**

Sudirman

**Redaksi Pelaksana:**

Muhammad Askari, S.H., M.Si.  
M. Asri B., S.Pd., M.Pd.  
Sit Rahma, S.S.  
Aminah, S.S., M.Pd.  
Ratna Amin, S.Pd.

**Alamat Redaksi:**

Balai Bahasa Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah  
Jalan Untad I, Bumi Roviga, Tondo, Palu Timur 94118  
Telepon (0451) 4705498

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**Tulisan yang dimuat di dalam jurnal ini  
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Setiap orang dapat menggandakan tulisan tersebut  
setelah mendapat izin tertulis dari Pemimpin Redaksi**

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# LANGUAGE PLAY: AN OVERVIEW

*Permainan Bahasa: Sebuah Kajian*

**Nuning Catur Sri Wilujeng**

Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University

Kolombo Street No.1 Yogyakarta 55282

E-mail: [nuningcatur@gmail.com](mailto:nuningcatur@gmail.com)

## **Abstrak**

*Manusia menggunakan bahasa untuk menyatakan perasaan, gagasan, dan pikiran. Permainan bahasa terjadi ketika manusia memanipulasi bahasa pada kata, kelompok kata, kalimat, dan lain-lain. Terdapat tiga kelompok permainan bahasa, yaitu permainan bahasa pada suara, bentuk, dan makna. Contoh dari permainan bahasa ini dapat ditemukan dalam alliterasi, anagram, ambigram, kaligram, pictogram, ligature, homofon, kata berbentuk kotak balok, humor, kartun, karikatur, dan lain sebagainya. Fungsi permainan bahasa dapat berupa berkelakar, mempersatukan bangsa, dan bahkan dapat merendahkan kelompok masyarakat lain.*

**Kata Kunci:** *bahasa, permainan bahasa, masyarakat*

## **Abstract**

People use language to express feeling, ideas, and thinking. Language play occurs when people manipulate it. The manipulation may happen in some linguistic feature such as word, a phrase, a sentence etc. Language play may happened in rhyme, repetition, puns, wordplay, and so on. Briefly there are three groups of language play which are sound language play, form language play, and meaning language play. The example of language play can be found in alliteration, anagram, ambigram, calligram, pictogram, ligature, homophone, square word, humor, joke, cartoon, caricature, and many more. The function of language play can be just for fun, to unite nation building, but also to disgrace the other group or society.

**Keywords:** language, language play, society

## **1. Introduction**

Language serves many more function than just to communicate the information. With the function as self-expression, people use language to express feeling, meaning, ideas, and thinking. There will be another person who receive it. Everybody has his/ her own language. In order that the interlocutor will be interested in, then understands, and finally agreed with the subject they're talking about, people may use unique, interesting, and manipulated language (Jakobson, 1960)

This paper characterizes the phenomenon of language play in daily life toward different languages.

## **2. Language Play (LP)**

LP happens when people manipulate the forms and functions of language as a source of fun for themselves and or for people they are with. The manipulation here means that we take some linguistic features- such as a word, a phrase, a sentence, a part of a word, a group of sounds, a series of letters – and then we make it do things it does not normally do.

Some aspect of linguistic structures is also available to become the focus of LP. They are pronunciation, writing system, vocabulary, syllable structure, pitch, speed of speech, etc. We sometimes bend and broke the rules of the language in order to create fun situation (Kuczaj, 1982; Cook, 2000; Crystal, 2001).

Further Cook mentioned that LP includes play with rhythm and sound, repetition, and rhyming. Therefore the LP can be found in the form of poetry, rap, and puns (Warner, 2004). Pomerantz & Bell (2007) said that besides in jokes and humor, LP can be functioned as safe house. This one happens when we are making friends or as a resistance in community when one group seems too dominate others.

Belz (2002) conducted an adult second LP towards English-speaking adult who learn Germany. The findings showed that LP occurred at phonological, orthographic, lexical syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic level of linguistics. Further, the learners were able to cleverly combine English and German morphemes for the purposes of humor and creativity.

In a ethnographic study in Taipei Taiwan, 張惠晶 (Zhang, 2003) found that words whether they are spoken, written, or manifest themselves as cultural artifacts, were considered as cultural performance. LP that appears as verbal artistry in the feature of poems, common saying, matched couplet, 成語 *chengyu* or proverb and so on, serves to make ordinary life interesting.

### 3. Types of LP

According to Cook (2000) there are three categories of LP. They are: 1) linguistic, 2) semantic, and 3) pragmatic. Jakobson (1960) defined language play as “play with the sounds ( or with letter shape, though this is less common) to create patterns of rhyme, rhythm, assonance, consonance, alliteration, etc, and play with the grammatical structure to create parallelisms and pattern. While Warner (2004) discovered three categories of LP, namely play with the form, play with the content/ or concept, and play with the frame. Play with the form in which we used rhymes, puns, repetitions, or poetry, occurred in one instance when we rhymed words in order to compose a rap. Play with the content/ or the concept which included role play and the creation of fictional worlds. Play with the frame is intentionally manipulates the meaning of the language.

To simplify the category, the writer divides the LP into three groups as follows:

#### 3.1. Sound LP

The terms of sound LP may be stand as alliteration (matching initial), assonance (matching vowels), consonance (matching consonants), onomatopoeia, homophones, double voicing, etc. the features will probably stretch, shorten, repeat, link, and alter sound.  
ini.

TABLE 1 EXAMPLES OF SOUND LP

TABLE 1 EXAMPLES OF SOUND LP

Alliteration, consonance	<i>vini vidi vici</i> , (Latin) learn it, love it, live it
Assonance	<i>muda foya-foya, tua kaya raya, mati masuk surga</i> (Indonesian)
Onomatopoeia	guk, moo, bang, boom,
Homophone	<b>I pad with IPAD, there-their</b>
Collocation	green grass, slip slop, creak croak, black block

Sound LP also happens in shifting the form of number in the form of double voicing. This kind of evident can easily be

found in the sending short message servise(sms).

TABLE 2 DOUBLE VOICING SOUND LP

3 Q	Thank you (in Chinese, 3 is pronounced /san/ from the character <sup>sān</sup> ,三Q)
555	Hahaha (In Thai language, 5 is pronounced /ha/)
88	Bye bye (in Chinese, 8 in pronounced /ba/)
86	Ready (In Indonesian, it is adopted from the ARMY code, instead of saying <i>siap</i> )

**3.2. Form LP**

**3.2.1. Alliteration:** words beginning with the same sound/ letter. Alliteration will be very useful in pronunciation rehearsal.

Example: "S" alliteration as a headlines

Saucy Sarah's Sex Secrets  
with Secretary of State

**3. 2.2. Ambigram:** is an art form that may be read as one or more words not only in its originally form as presented, but also from another viewpoint, direction or orientation (Langdon, 1992)

Example: the word "Illuminati" from Angels & Demons by Dan Brown



**3.2.3. Anagram:** reordering letters in a word/ phrase to find another word or phrase; try to find a transposition that relates in meaning to the original (Crystal, 2001).

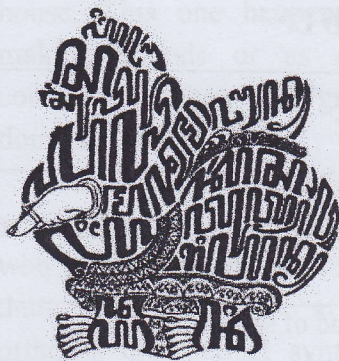


TABLE 3 EXAMPLES OF ANAGRAM

Teach	Cheat
dormitory	dirty room
they eyes	they see
Presbyterian	best in prayer
George Bush	He bugs Gore
Desperation	a rope ends it
absence makes a heart grow fonder	he wants back dearest gone from here

3.2.4. Calligram

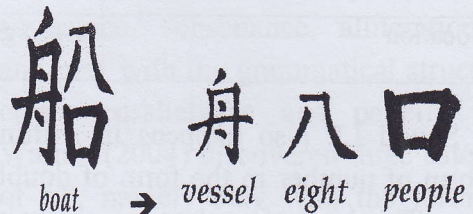
Also known as shaped poems. Larking (2009) says that Calligrams are drawing made of glyphs. Calligrams often found in Chinese, Arabic, Javanese, etc.



“Ing ngarsa sung tulada, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani” A Javanese proverb have been using in Indonesian education. It was created by Ki Hadjar Dewantara that means “A good leader, in stand in front will give good example, in the middle will give spirit, and will give the power from behind.”

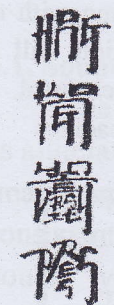
3.2.5. Ligatures

Ligature is the act of typing or binding.



A Chinese character <sup>chuán</sup> 船 which means a boat. This <sup>chuán</sup> 船 character can be devided into <sup>zhōu</sup> 舟, <sup>bā</sup> 八, <sup>kǒu</sup> 口, which means a vessel for eight people. A vessel for eight people might refer to a boat.

3.2.6. Square Word



HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

A glimpse look at the written words seems like a Chinese character. As it is known people in Hong Kong speak Chinese. But it is probably only a verbal artistic, the art on how to write “HONG KONG University Press” in two different ways.

### 3.2.7. Pictograph

Also known as pictogram(me), which is an ideogram that conveys the meaning though its pictorial resemblance. The picture is always similar to its object. We can easily find the pictograph of 雞 jī means chicken, 莓 méi means strawberry or variant of berry, and 蜜 mì means honey.

FIGURE 1 CHINESE PICTOGRAPH



### 3.2.8. Visual Puns

It is a form of word play which has two or more meaning by manipulating the meaning of the word, shape, or similar sound. It is also known as paronomasia.

Both visual puns below refer to “egg”. In Chinese character, egg is written 蛋 dàn which similar in shape as the first visual pun.



Egg = 蛋

EGG  
EGGEGG  
EGGEGGEGG  
EGGEGGEGGE  
GGEGGEGGEGG  
EGGEGGEGGEGG  
EGGEGGEGGEGGE  
GGEGGEGGEGGEGG  
GEGGEGGEGGEGG  
EGGEGGEGGEGG  
EGGEGGEGGEGG  
GEGGEGGEGG  
EGGEGG

### 3.3. Meaning LP

Vygotsky (1978) explained that play is required for the development of higher mental (play as rehearsal). Along with Vygotsky, Lantolf (1997) also said that LP serves as private speech (rehearsal). In language learning this kind of LP can be found in pronunciation, especially when somebody learn foreign language. The rehearsal of minimal pairs of phonemes often stand as a mode to master the pronunciation of target language. The example of alliteration in “S” below can be also a rehearsal to well pronounce between /s/ and /sh/.



“six silly sisters selling shiny shoes”

Pomerantz & Bell (2007) mentioned LP as a safe house. In order to be safe, people should find a way to play with the language. People will manipulate the language in the form of humor, jokes,

cartoon, caricature, style of language, riddle, wordplay, etc.

Language helps us to more aware of people who use the language in our society. Some people manipulate language as a source of enjoyment, either for themselves or for the benefits of others, simply just because to make it fun (Crystal, 2001). A group of people might use different language from other groups, therefore, some people might be familiar with a certain style of language, and some people don't (Downes, 2003).

Some other use language meaning play to show how to be self-deprecating and modest, that is important politeness (Liao, 1998). LP is important socially, as it brings people into rapport with each other. The emotion attachment between them, a group of people bond by sharing their language play makes them closer (Crystal, 2001).

The sigle “LP” in this paper stands for Language Play. A branch of Linguistics. While in Indonesian society, especially in law and order term, the LP will refer to *Lembaga Pemasyarakatan* or prison. This LP itself has a ameliorative meaning rather than just a prison or jail, or *penjara* in Indonesian. While when we

launce LP in Taiwanese society, it brings us to a different explanation. In Taiwanese society, LP stands for *lan pha* which mean male organ. Therefore LP here makes the real meaning more polite.

Chosen word as a part of LP may have function in building a nation. In Taiwan, the aboriginal tribes prefer to be

called <sup>yuán zhù mín</sup> ,原 ,住 ,民 rather the

sh ān b āo ,山 ,胞 though both, initially

had the same meaning. The Indigenous people in Taiwan refuse the appellation of

the word <sup>sh ān b āo</sup> ,山 ,胞 because in the

Chinese character <sup>b āo</sup> ,胞 means sibling

from the same parents. These people think this meaning of

is how the Han people's did with ethnocentricity. These action

then followed by maintenance and support to the sustainability of those aboriginal

people in Taiwan. By using to word whose nuance better, it is hoped that the condition

of the unity of Taiwan will stronger. The alignment for the minority influences in

the nation building (Sheng, 2012). This statement support Pomerantz&Bell (2007)

about LP as a safe house. The using <sup>yuán zhù mín</sup>

,原 ,住 ,民 can be shown as a resistant towards the dominant of Chinese people upon Taiwanese.

LP might reduce the tension, reunite people, make friends, for fun, etc. This kind of LP usually found in the form of

joke, humor, cartoon, ludic utterance,

caricature, comedy, and so on. Pay attention to some examples below. Example (1) showing the absurdity which is straightforward and colloquially standard, example (2) showing a joke with a linguistics basic in the way a word imitated sound of sheep, and the example (3) showing a joke which play with the grammatical structure of a sentence(Crystal, 2001).

(1) "I say, I say, I say: Would you like to play with my dog?"

"Does he bite?"

"I don't know. That's what I want to find out!"

(2) "Doctor, doctor, I've swallow a sheep"

"How do you feel"

"Very baaaaaad"

(3) "Dad, what are all those in the new shed?"

"They're knot-holes."

"What do you mean "They're not holes"? I can put my finger right through them."

There are also some LP which have negative meaning such as Chinglish (Chinese people who speak English still with the tone and Chinese dialects), some Sundanese who cannot pronounce /ph/ correctly, some Balinese people who cannot differentiate between phoneme /t/ and /th/, etc. People from different group might use imitation of some dialects to look down or make fun of some other groups. Stereotype in using color that bring to racism also easily slips to conflict.



From the picture about we can note that the wishes “happy thanksgiving” from the Chicken does not mean a wishes. Even the Turkey replied “fuck you”. Culture also influent into this joke. Thanksgiving is US tradition. During that day the member of a family will have special menu, which is Turkey. Therefore “Happy Thanksgiving” wishes for the Turkey mean “RIP”

#### 4. Conclusion

During the writing of this paper, it is found that LP can be happened in some different languages such as Javanese, Indonesian, English, French, Chinese, Arabic, and Latin. Those LP stand in the

form of alliteration, anagram, ambigram, calligram, pictogram, ligature, homophone, square word, humor, and joke.

The function of language play can be just for fun, to unite nation building, but also to disgrace the other group or society. This implies that we should be careful and wise when we talk to whom, when, and in what occasion.

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## Appendix

### 1. Alliteration

1.1. *ta tante t'attend dans ta tente* means “your aunt is waiting for you in your tend”

1.2. *Rumah Sangat Sederhana Slonjor Saja Susah Sekali*

### 2. Homophone

2.1



This LP was found in Hong Kong, when Mc Donald launced its product rice and fried chicken. It is red “Fantastic”. The word “Fan” was written in Chinese 飯, which means rice. As it is know, in Hong Kong people also understand Chinese, and they also eat rice.

2.2.



This is found in Taiwan, as one of the leading café shop. The name of the shop is “Eco coffee”. The letter “E” can be found as a cup. In English, the word “E” is pronounced [i]. In Chinese it is written 壹, 咖, 啡. The character 壹 means one, therefore the meaning can be “the number one café shop”.

2.3.



In French word there is *les enfants* means children, while on that shop there also an elephant, which in French is *un éléphant*. The phoneme /ph/ in *éléphant* is pronounced as [f] in the *les enfants*. And the mixed between *les enfants* and *elephant* becomes *Les enphants*, the same sound as *les enfants*. The word *Les enphants* does not have meaning, but as is one of the language play character is “going beyond the norm-clearly distinct from the “normal” use of language, or manipulating the language.

2.4.



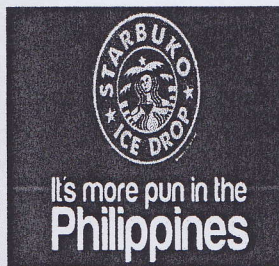
A bakery got influence from NIKE logo and the slogan “Just do it”. Even though “Just eat it” sounds a bit different from the pronunciation of “Just do it”, but the image, will bring people to the image of NIKE. This is also can be classified as homophone or double voicing (Bakhtin, 1981)

2.5.



“HANKINGDONUTS” and “DRINKIN’ DON’T DRUNK”, both can be categorized as sound puns, homophone or double voicing with the original one “DUNKIN’ DONUTS”

2.6.



“STAR FUCKS”, “STARBUKO” and “SCARE BUGS”, those three brand names can be categorized as sound puns, homophone or double voicing as well. “STAR FUCKS” is a name of café shop in Mainland China. “STARBUKO” is a soft drink product in the Philippines with coconut flavor. The last one “SCARE BUGS” which refers to cockroach or *corro* in Javanese. It is a puns in a T-Shirt product from Yogyakarta, Indonesia. All is double voicing or homophone of the “STARBUCK” café shop’s brand from USA.

3. Ambigram

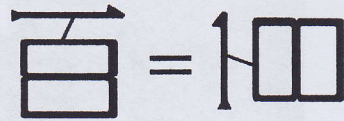
3.1.





shì ,是 with an artificial touch become the form of “YES”. While shì ,是 itself in English also means “YES”

3.2.



bǎi ,百 is a Chinese character mean 100 or one hundred.

3.3.



”Angel & Demond” can be red from both left to right and right to left direction. It is verbal artistic (Zhang, 2003).

#### 4. Ligatures

4.1.



→ can be divided into ,圖 ,書 ,館, means Library.

tú shū guǎn

4.2.



熊

xióng ,熊 in the shape of bear. The xióng ,熊 means bear. It is interesting character or picture. In teaching Chinese, especially for children the bear shape will help the to memorize how to write it Chinese character.

4.3.



cháng jǐng lù  
 ,長 ,頸 ,鹿 in the shape of giraffe. It is a brand name of an English courses for children in Taipei, Taiwan. The shape giraffe in the Chinese character of cháng jǐng lù ,長 ,頸 ,鹿 helps children to remember how to write the character and the meaning.

## 5. Calligrams

### 5.1



*Bismillahir Rahmannir Rahiim* (Arabic) in the shape of pear fruit means “In the name of God, the most merciful and benevolent.”

### 5.2.

S  
 A  
 LUT  
 M  
 O N  
 D E  
 DONT  
 JE SUIS  
 LA LAN  
 GUE É  
 LOQUEN  
 TE QUESA  
 BOUCHE  
 O PARIS  
 TIRE ET TIRERA  
 TOU            IOURS  
 AUX            A L  
 LEM            ANDS

*Salut monde dont je suis la langue eloquente que sa bouche O Paris tire et tirera toujours aux allemands* (French) means “Hallo world, I am the eloquent language as fluent as the mouth, O Paris pulls and will always draw Germany”

5.3.



A swan in the shape of swan. Without open a dictionary, we 'll possibly easily understand the meaning of swan by looking at it shape.

